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Young people, parents and radical right voting. The Case of the Swiss People's Party

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ABSTRACT

It is commonly found that young people tend to adopt the political party choice of their parents. However, far less is known about the applicability of this theory when investigating radical right support. Using the Swiss Household panel data (1999–2007), this study empirically identifies the relationship between parents' preference for the Swiss radical right party SVP and their attitudes toward immigrants and the EU, and their offspring's preference for the SVP. Disaggregating fathers' and mothers' influence reveals that in particular, mothers' SVP support plays a role in SVP support among young people, even after controlling for educational similarities. We also demonstrate that girls are more likely to be influenced by their mothers than are boys. Furthermore, parents' negative attitudes toward the EU exert a positive influence on their children's radical right voting, independent of their voting pattern.

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1. Introduction

Since the 1980s, radical right wing parties have been successful in various Western European countries. This success has provoked the sociologically significant question of who votes for these parties, which has been mirrored by a significant increase in the number of scientific studies of the extreme right's electorate. Many theories and explanations have been suggested for this phenomenon, yet significant gaps in understanding remain. A theory that has, to the best of our knowledge, not been tested empirically in

the radical right research is parental transmission. In his recent work on the radical right in Europe, Mudde (2007: 217) notes that there is little doubt about the crucial importance of the family in shaping political party affiliations, but at the same time, he recognises that not much is known about the topic.

Our research seeks to fill this void and investigate how parental radical right voting and radical right attitudes are related to the likelihood that a young person will support the radical right. Therefore, our central research question reads: To what extent do the parents' radical right party voting and radical right attitudes affect their children's radical right voting? In particular, we will focus on the Swiss SVP.² Even though discussions continue about the definition of the family of radical right parties and debates over whether the SVP can be classified as a radical right party remain, the SVP is considered to belong to this party

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² This party is formally known in German as the Schweizerische Volkspartei (SVP) and in French as the Union Démocratique du Centre (UDC).

family by most radical right scholars (e.g. McGann and Kitschelt, 2005; Mudde, 2007; Oesch, 2008; Ivarsflaten, 2008). Clearly, as a member of government for several decades the SVP's position differs fundamentally from the position of its counterparts in other political systems (Betz, 2001). However, with the change of its ideological profile since the nineties, it shares with other new radical right parties a belief in a united and sovereign population and a xenophobic rhetoric. Hence, a growing consensus has emerged of considering the SVP as a radical right party.

Consequently, with our focus on the SVP, we believe to contribute to the rich literature on the radical right, in which radical right parties such as the Front National, Vlaams Belang and the FPÖ have been studied extensively. Yet the research on SVP is relatively limited in the international (English) literature – McGann and Kitschelt (2005), Fontana et al. (2006) and Oesch (2008) being notable exceptions – and it is often neglected in comparative analyses on the radical right (e.g. Arzheimer and Carter, 2006; Bale, 2003; Givens, 2004; Ignazi, 2003), despite it being one of the most successful radical right parties in Western Europe.

Another contribution of our paper to the research on the radical right is its focus on young people. Indeed, the question as to why young people are likely to vote for the radical right is underdeveloped at best. Yet, this is particularly relevant given that research has revealed that radical right parties on the whole do well among young people and first time voters (Lubbers et al., 2002; Mudde, 2007).³

Besides further developing our knowledge about radical right parties and their success, and bringing socialisation theories into the research on the radical right, an additional aim of our paper is to further test the theory of parental transmission or, more generally, socialisation theory. Like any well-established research tradition in the social sciences, this theory requires frequent testing. Critical analysis of political socialisation theories is particularly important as times change and the fortunes of various political parties shift dramatically at the macro level. Indeed, socialisation theories have generally been tested in stable political environments and for mainstream parties (Sapiro, 2004). Besides, as Sapiro (2004) notes in her review of recent research on political socialisation, the topic has mostly interested American scholars. Using the Swiss Household Panel data (1999–2007), our study will put socialisation theories to the test outside the USA using a political outsider that has recently experienced growing success, progressing from garnering 11.9 per cent support in the 1991 national elections to an election-winning 29 per cent in 2007.

We further plan to develop previous insights on family and party choice in three important ways. First, we investigate both the influence of the parents' radical right party choice and related attitudes on their offspring's radical right party choice and test whether it is the parents' radical right

party choice or rather their related attitudes (such as negativity toward immigrants and the EU) that lead youngsters to vote for the radical right. In other words, we will try to establish which mechanism is most important. Second, we look at the mothers' and fathers' influences separately, arguing that the two parents may play different roles. Third, we investigate whether father's or mother's SVP voting and radical right attitudes matter differently for sons and daughters.

The paper proceeds as follows. We begin by reviewing theoretical insights on family and party choice and by presenting our hypotheses on the influence of parents on their offspring's radical right voting behaviour. The next section introduces data and measurements. Our multivariate analyses are presented in the third section. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of our results and suggestions for further research.

2. Theory and hypotheses

The role of family as a prime agent of socialisation has occupied an important place in the literature on political partisanship, showing that family, and mainly parents, play a prominent role in a person's political orientation (Jennings, 2007: 38). In their groundbreaking research on political socialisation, Jennings and Niemi (1968, 1974) uncovered a high degree of partisan consistency between parents and children. In more recent research, Jennings et al. (2009) confirm that parents are successful in passing along their partisan orientations to their children. It has been argued that like almost everyone else, children "take the political cues of trusted loved ones with whom they frequently interact" (Zuckerman et al., 2007: 93). Besides, as young persons enter the electorate, they usually do not have a reason to reject their parents' preferences.

However, the golden age of socialisation research was in the late sixties and early seventies. It has mostly focused on mainstream parties in relatively stable political environments and has been criticized for not being able to explain processes of change (Greenstein, 1970; Sapiro, 2004; Wass, 2007). The critique is directed towards the research that sees children as being more or less direct recipients or inheritors of parental political traits (Beck and Jennings, 1991). In addition to the fact that children may observe and copy their parents' norms and behaviour, they may also be influenced by age-peers, age-graded institutions such as the school and socio-historical events (Bengtson, 1975). The influence of such age-related factors, referred to as "generation effects", may result in the emergence of alternative attitudes and behaviour which may result in social change. In other words, some changes in preferences may originate from generational replacement due to the fact that the young cohorts have adopted essentially different values and patterns of behaviour compared to the previous cohorts (Niemi and Sobieszek, 1977). This may particularly be the case for newer parties in the political system which may be more successful in attracting newer voters. For example, considering the effect of age, research (e.g. Birch, 2009) revealed that young people were more likely to vote for the greens than older citizens.

³ As for the SVP, the Swiss Household panel data used in the present paper reveal that young persons (age 18–25) are relatively more likely than their parents (age 35–80) to support the SVP. (Results available upon request).

There is less consensus about the relation between age and radical right voting, though several scholars argue that radical right parties are supported disproportionately by both the youngest and the oldest cohorts of the general electorate (e.g. Van Craen and Swyngedouw, 2002; Arzheimer and Carter, 2006). If younger citizens are over-represented (though the same would hold for underrepresentation) within the electorate of a particular party, it may indicate that they vote in a different way than their parents' generation. This idea is also related to the dealignment literature which suggests that fewer young citizens are beginning their voting experience with a partisan attachment inherited from their parents (Dalton, 2000).

Hence, it remains to be seen how strong the influence of parents is with respect to radical right party preferences in less stable political systems than those of some decades ago. Swyngedouw (2001: 228) states in his research on the Flemish Vlaams Blok (currently Vlaams Belang) voters that socialisation motives are scarce among these voters and less frequent than among voters of 'old pillar parties'. However, some scholars argue that radical rightists come from radical right families. For example, Klandermans and Mayer (2005) revealed that many activists of the populist radical right groups were raised in such families. Yet, as Mudde (2007: 218) notes, the voters may have a different background than the activists. Then again, radical right voters are considered to be loyal voters and true party supporters (Mudde, 2007). Previous research has revealed that the transmission of attitudes and partisanship is stronger the more consistent and salient the partisanship is (Jennings et al., 2009). Hence, we expect parental SVP support to positively influence children's SVP preference.

Traditionally, political socialisation scholars have tested the hypothesis that parents and their children vote for the same party by looking for similarities between the partisan preferences of young people and their parents. They presume that in one way or another, parents reveal their voting preferences to their children (Beck and Jennings, 1991). However, research has shown that some parents are uncommunicative about their political behaviour with their children (Converse and Dupeux, 1962). Hence, it is important to investigate an alternative besides the straightforward relationship between parents' and children's party choices. There may indeed be a more unintentional form of political socialisation at stake via the exposure of young people to the (political) views and attitudes their parents express. As such, parents would be the 'transmitters' of political views, which would consequently influence young people's party choices. This may particularly be the case with respect to radical right voting, which is strongly influenced by attitudes. Previous research has indeed revealed how *radical right attitudes*, such as anti-immigrant attitudes, influence radical right voting (Coffé, 2005; Lubbers et al., 2002; Mudde, 2007). These are salient political attitudes where parental cue-giving is likely (Dalton, 1980). Hence, we expect negative parental attitudes toward immigrants and the EU – two main ideological dispositions of the SVP electorate (McGann and Kitschelt, 2005) – to positively influence children's SVP party preference.

Previous research on family socialisation has revealed that not all parents are equally successful in transmitting their party choices and attitudes. Jaspers et al. (2008) find that mothers are more successful in influencing their children's attitudes than fathers. Mayer and Schmidt (2004) notice that the mother is the only reliable predictor for political socialisation in Japan, which has been explained by the higher frequency of interaction between mothers and their children (Bao et al., 1999). Work by Zuckerman et al. (2007) reveals that although women tend to be viewed as less politically involved, mothers stand at the centre of the household and matter more than fathers with regard to their offspring's partisanship in Britain and Germany. Thus, we hypothesise that mothers have a larger influence on their children's SVP party preference than fathers.

Differences across children also occur with regard to parental influence. In particular, the forces of political socialisation affect boys and girls differently. Trevor (1999: 66) notes that "men show more independence from parental influence", whereas women are more submissive and obedient. As a result of these attitudes, daughters are more likely to copy their parents' attitudes and party identification. Hence, we hypothesise that the parental influence on their offspring's SVP choice will be larger for daughters than for sons.

Moreover, as women tend to be more central in family life (McGoldrick, 1991) and as daughters usually interact more with their mothers than sons do (Bao et al., 1999), we expect mothers' SVP preferences and attitudes to matter more for daughters' than for sons' SVP voting behaviour.

One dominant critique of socialisation studies is that the positive correlations between parental and youth partisan support are misinterpreted. Whereas proponents of the socialisation hypotheses see intergenerational influence in the similarity in voting behaviour between parents and their offspring, others suggest that parents and their children reason and behave independently. They argue that the influence the family may have on political orientations is foremost the result of the family's providing the child with a social identity and a location within the social structure, which, in turn, affects political orientations (Glass et al., 1986; Beck and Jennings, 1991). This argument has been referred to as the *spurious relationship hypothesis* (Tedin, 1974: 1581). The influential factors in such analyses stem from parents' structural positions and include educational attainment, which has been proven to be an important predictor of radical right voting. Support for the radical right has been shown to vary inversely with the level of education (e.g. Billiet and de Witte, 2008; Lubbers and Scheepers, 2001; Lubbers et al., 2002; Norris, 2005; Rink et al., 2009), though some studies revealed a curvilinear relationship, with the radical right receiving its strongest support from the mid-school category (Arzheimer and Carter, 2006; Evans, 2005; Rydgren, 2008). In any case, it is consistently found that highly educated people are less likely to vote for radical right parties. Thus, it is important to take these variables into account if we want to be able to estimate the socialising effects that actually stem from parents' radical right voting and anti-immigrant and -EU attitudes.

3. Data and measurements

The hypotheses presented above were tested using data from the Swiss Household Panel (SHP). The SHP is a yearly panel study collecting data from all household members in randomly selected households in Switzerland. Because the Swiss Household Panel collects data from all household members and includes several questions about political attitudes, it is especially well suited for examining the inter-generational transmission of voting behaviour. Most electoral studies and studies on socialisation rely on family-level estimates obtained from young respondents, and no information is available directly from the parents. In the present study, however, we can rely on the parents' own answers regarding their political attitudes and voting behaviour.

The first wave of the SHP dates back to 1999, when 5074 households were interviewed, yielding 7799 individual interviews with household members. In 2004, 2538 households (3654 individuals) were added to replace households that had been lost from the study. In 2007, the sample consisted of 7457 individuals.⁴ To reach a large enough number of observations to conduct the analysis, we employed all available data, which included all waves conducted from 1999 to 2007.

In each wave all respondents aged 18 to 25 who claimed Swiss nationality and whose parents both responded, were selected, yielding 2292 observations. The age span included the first year an individual was eligible to vote (the voting age in Switzerland is 18⁵). Only households with complete interviews with both parents and at least one child in the right age range were used, which constituted only a small subsample of the total original sample. Some respondents were siblings and shared both parents. Cases with many missing values ($n = 69$) on other key variables were excluded from the analysis, leading to an analytical sample of 2223 observations from 919 youngsters and 580 pairs of parents. Of all respondents, 40.5 per cent were in the dataset only once, 36.7 per cent were included twice or three times, 16.3 per cent had four or five valid interviews and 6.5 per cent were in the dataset six times or more, with a maximum of nine appearances in the dataset.

Of the respondents, 497 were men (54.1 per cent) and 422 were women (45.9 per cent). In 9.4 per cent of the observations the father was not living in the household. For the mothers this percentage was 9.6.

3.1. Dependent variable

To investigate political party preference, the respondents were asked which party they would vote for if federal elections took place tomorrow. As we are interested in radical right voting, we operationalised our dependent variable as a dummy: it was equal to 1 for young persons who would vote for the radical right party SVP if elections would take place tomorrow and 0 otherwise.⁶ Of all

observations, 12.1 per cent expressed the preference to vote for the SVP, coming from 177 individuals. Of the young people, 19.3 per cent expressed a preference for the SVP at least once.

3.2. Key explanatory variables

The first main explanatory variable is the parents' party preference for the SVP. The variable equals 1 for parents who would vote for the SVP if there was an election for the National Council tomorrow and 0 for parents who would vote for another party than the SVP. To test our hypothesis that mothers matter more as socialising agents than fathers with regard to their offspring's radical right party choice, we distinguished between the party choices of the father and the mother. Overall, 10.7 per cent of the party preference responses among fathers and 7.2 per cent among mothers were for the SVP ($r = .45$). Hence, our data confirm the previous finding that women are less likely to vote for radical right parties in general and SVP in particular than men (Givens, 2004; Norris, 2005).⁷

In addition to the parents' party preference, we included parents' attitudes related to radical right voting, which included father's and mother's anti-EU sentiments and intolerance toward immigrants. Previous research has revealed that these attitudes are linked to radical right voting in general and SVP voting in particular (Coffé, 2005; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Lubbers et al., 2002; Nicolet and Sciarini, 2006; Oesch, 2008; Skenderovic, 2007). This may be related to the ideological discourse of the SVP, which is very much focused on opposition to immigration and the European Union.⁸ To measure negative attitudes toward immigrants, respondents were asked whether they were in favour of Switzerland offering the same opportunities to Swiss citizens, in favour of Switzerland offering Swiss citizens better opportunities, or neither. The variable was recoded into a dummy, with the value of 1 referring to an attitude in favour of offering Swiss citizens better opportunities and 0 otherwise. Our indicator of attitudes toward the EU was a dummy taking the value of 1 when respondents were 'in favour of Switzerland staying outside of the EU' and 0 when respondents were 'in favour of Switzerland joining the EU' or 'neither'. An anti-EU sentiment was

⁷ Note that, as in most electoral studies, SVP voters are underrepresented in the SHP survey. Indeed, over all observations (for the different years taken together), of the people who expressed a preference for a party, 18% voted in favor of the SVP. The electoral results of the party were: 14.9% in 1995, 22.6% in 1999, 26.7% in 2003. The party gained 28.9 percent in the most recent elections of 2009.

⁸ Whereas dissatisfaction with democracy makes an important contribution to the understanding of different radical right parties in Western Europe, previous research revealed that it carries little weight in the explanation of SVP voting (Ivarsflaten, 2008; Oesch, 2008). This may be related to its status as a leading Swiss party which is represented in government, in contrast to the status of an opposition parties as is the case for most radical right party. Notwithstanding previous findings, we did test the influence of trust in federal government. In line with previous findings, it was found that political trust is not significantly related to SVP voting. Hence we did not include the attitude in our models.

⁴ For survey details, see www.swisspanel.ch.

⁵ Switzerland lowered its voting age from 20 to 18 in 1991 by national referendum. In 2007 the canton of Glarus decided to lower the voting age to 16 for communal and cantonal elections.

⁶ Note that respondents claiming that they would not vote for a party or would not participate in the elections are included in the reference category.

expected to predict SVP support because the party has used this issue extensively in its campaigns, and research suggests that they benefitted electorally from this strategy (McGann and Kitschelt, 2005; Ivarsflaten, 2006). Among the mothers, in 27.3 per cent of the cases, a preference for the Swiss having better opportunities than immigrants was expressed. Among fathers, this value was 24.6 per cent ($r = .23$). Regarding anti-EU sentiments, percentages for mothers and fathers were 36.4 per cent and 43.3 per cent, respectively ($r = .51$).

3.3. Control variables

To investigate whether the parents' socialisation effects on their children's party support is the result of the common household social position as suggested by the spurious relationship hypothesis, we included in our models a variable indicating the socioeconomic status of the household. We introduced father's and mother's educational attainment to measure the household's status in society. Time and again, research on radical right parties has shown that high education is a strong buffer against radical right voting (Lubbers et al., 2002; Norris, 2005). The level of education of the father and mother was measured in 11 categories, where 0 equals *did not complete elementary school* and 10 equals *university*. The mean score for mothers was 4.99 and for fathers 6.58, and the correlation between the two was .47.

Since parents influence the status positions their children achieve (De Graaf et al., 2000), it is also important to control for the children's status positions. For this reason, we included educational level and occupational status of the respondent. Educational level was operationalised in the same way as for the parents ($M = 3.84$). In addition, we included a dummy for whether the child was still enrolled in school, which was the case in 65 per cent of the observations. This dummy reflects the institutional or social integration of the children and controls for the fact that young people's educational level at school is obviously influenced by the fact that they are still completing their education. Occupational status was measured using the Erikson–Goldthorpe–Portocarero classification (EGP), which is based on employment status and occupation (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992). Because 33.8 per cent of the youth did not yet have an occupation, the scale of originally 11 categories was recoded into three dummy variables where the group without occupation functioned as the reference group. The low status group included semi- and unskilled manual employees, farm labour and self-employed farmers, the medium status group contained self-employed with and without employees, manual supervisors, skilled manual employees and routine non-manual employees, and the high status group was made up of higher controllers and low controllers.

We further control for different individual characteristics that have been related to radical right voting behaviour in previous research. Past research on the radical right has found that non-religious people are overrepresented in the radical right electorate (Billiet, 1995; Coffé, 2005). In addition, churchgoers are less likely to support the radical right. Hence, we included a measure of the individual's frequency

of church attendance in order to account for the effects of religious organisational participation on radical right support. Frequency of church attendance ranged from 0 (never) to 8 (several times a week). The mean score was 2.8. We made additional adjustments for the role of individual characteristics through the inclusion of age ($M = 20.8$) and gender (48 per cent female) as control variables. Gender has been identified as a consistent predictor of radical right voting, as male voters are over-represented among the voters of the radical right parties, including the Swiss radical right (Fontana et al., 2006; Givens, 2004; Gidengel et al., 2005; Norris, 2005; Fontana et al., 2006).

We also introduced attitudinal characteristics of the respondent: negative attitudes toward immigrants (expressed in 24 per cent of the observations) and toward the EU (45 per cent). Both attitudes are coded similarly to the parental attitudes as presented above.

Because we were primarily interested in intra-household factors, it was important to account for external forces. Given that the SVP has a traditional base in German speaking areas, we included the language of the interview. Two dummy variables were included, one for French language (24 per cent of the observations) and one for Italian (2.5 per cent of the observations) to contrast against the German speaking respondents (74 per cent of the observations).

3.4. Analytical strategy

In the analyses below, we examine the effect of parental SVP voting and radical right attitudes on young people's SVP voting behaviour. Since we use panel data, we have multiple observations within persons who are nested within parents and thus *nonindependent* observations, making ordinary regression models unsuitable. Rather than losing information by using only one observation per respondent and one child per parent, we chose to use all observations available.⁹ To control for the clustered structure of the data, we apply a multilevel model with observations nested within individuals (Snijders and Bosker, 1999). Multilevel analysis models responses in different waves within and between individuals by estimating regression equations on both levels simultaneously. Multilevel models therefore take account of the nested structure of the data and use the right number of cases. Our models distinguish between three levels: 580 Level 3 observations (parents), 918 Level 2 observations (individuals) and 2221 Level 1 observations (observations for different years within individuals). Because the dependent variable is binary, we use a multilevel logistic model to estimate the likelihood for young people to vote for the SVP versus not to vote for the SVP. For interpretation purposes, the age of the respondent and the educational attainment of both the respondent and the parents were centred to the mean.

Four models are presented. Model 1 includes the SVP voting preference of the parents in addition to the control

⁹ To assess the strength and stability of our findings we also ran the models using only one wave (2004, containing 472 observations). Results from these analyses were comparable and are available upon request.

variables. Model 2 includes attitudes of the parents and the control variables. The first two regression models test, respectively, the relevance of parental SVP voting and parental radical right attitudes when explaining young people's SVP voting, controlling for demographic influences. To further investigate the relevance of parental SVP voting and attitudes when explaining youngsters' SVP voting, all variables are included in the third model. We finally consider the potential that the effects of parental SVP voting and parental attitudes matter differently for sons and daughters and test the result of adding significant interaction effects in Model 4. Descriptive statistics for all variables included in our analyses are provided in the [Appendix](#).

3.5. Methodological issues

Prior to presenting our estimation results, two related and important methodological issues must be raised. First, the explanation of young people's preference for the radical right by parental radical right voting behaviour and attitudes may face problems of 'reverse causality'. Indeed, it is possible that parents are influenced by their offspring. Hence, it is not always clear in what direction the flow of causality runs when interpreting the correlation between parental radical right attitudes and voting behaviour and young people's radical right voting. While it is reasonable to suspect that reciprocity may prevail and all members of the household may influence one another, we believe that the influence will primarily run from parents to their children as most young people have less experience with politics and usually have no *a priori* reason to reject their parents' party preference.

Second, some debate may arise over our measurement of parental influence, namely at the same point in time for both parents and youngsters. Indeed, the study of political socialisation is widely regarded as the study of children because people's basic orientations to politics are established during childhood (Sapiro, 2004: 13). However, as Alford et al. (2005: 154) note, in contrast to early political socialisation researchers, more contemporary researchers have shown that recent circumstances and events can change preferences. Hence, it seems reasonable to suspect that parents may socialise their children toward a particular party preference through their current voting behaviour.

4. Results

We now turn to the explanatory analyses to investigate parental influence on SVP voting among young people. The results of the multivariate analyses are presented in [Table 1](#).

Model 1 in [Table 1](#) suggests that parental SVP support matters for young people's preference for the radical right party. Model 1 in [Table 1](#) shows that when parents choose the SVP as their favoured party, the chance that their offspring will also be inclined to vote for the SVP is significantly higher, independent of other household- and individual-level characteristics. In other words, the influence of parental voting behaviour on young people's

voting behaviour is not due to common household characteristics, as predicted by the *spurious relationship hypothesis* (Tedin, 1974). Indeed, our findings do not affirm the claim that similarity in political preferences is due to the family's shared location in the social structure, as we control for both the parents' and the respondents' social position. Parents' educational level does not affect their children's SVP voting behaviour after controlling for the children's socioeconomic and attitudinal characteristics.¹⁰

In line with our expectations, our results also indicate that mothers are more influential than fathers, judging from the difference in size of the coefficients, although both have an independent influence on their offspring. This provides initial evidence for the need to disentangle the mother's and father's influences on their offspring's SVP preference.

Turning to the control variables, we see that – as would be expected – the young people's negative attitudes toward immigrants and the European Union are strongly and positively related to a radical right party choice. Young males are, on average, more supportive of the SVP than young females. This corresponds with previous research with respect to extreme right support among adults (Givens, 2004; Gidengal et al., 2005). Speaking Italian considerably decreases the chance that a young person votes for the SVP. In line with most previous research on the radical right (Lubbers et al., 2002; Norris, 2005), our findings show that less educated individuals are more likely to vote for the SVP. Being enrolled in school is not associated with SVP support, but whether one has a paid job is. All three levels of occupational status differ significantly from the group without an occupation: they are all more likely to vote for the SVP. Differences between the occupational status groups are not significant. In contrast to previous research (Billiet, 1995; Coffé, 2005), we do not find a significant relationship between church attendance and SVP voting.

Turning to the second model, we see that parents' negative attitudes toward the EU have a positive effect on their children's preference for the SVP. Thus, those young people whose parents hold negative attitudes toward immigrants are more likely to vote for the SVP. No significant associations were found between parental negative attitudes toward immigrants and the chance that a young person will vote for the radical right. Note that the effect of the parents' attitudes holds even after controlling for their children's negative attitudes toward immigrants and the EU.

Moving onto a model that includes both the parents' SVP voting behaviour and radical right attitudes (Model 3), we find that the effect of mothers' SVP voting on youngsters' SVP voting is robust. Even after controlling for mothers' negative attitudes toward immigrants and the EU, mothers' radical right voting behaviour significantly influences their offspring's radical right party choice. The odds

¹⁰ Without the inclusion of the respondents' attitudes, parents' educational level is significantly and negatively related to SVP voting. This effect disappears after inclusion of attitudes.

Table 1

Results of multilevel logistic regression of youngsters' SVP voting on parental background and control variables (Level 1 $N = 2,221$, Level 2 $N = 918$, Level 3 $N = 580$).

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B	S.E.	OR	B	S.E.	OR	B	S.E.	OR	B	S.E.	OR
<i>Parental background: SVP voting</i>												
SVP voting mother	1.887***	.413	6.603				1.734***	.420	5.665	1.022*	.502	2.780
SVP voting father	.642~	.354	1.900				.488	.367	1.629	.534	.370	1.706
SVP voting mother * female										1.984**	.768	7.275
<i>Parental background: attitudes</i>												
Negative attitude immigrants mother				.428	.271	1.534	.344	.270	1.411	.326	.271	1.385
Negative attitude immigrants father				.318	.296	1.375	.196	.293	1.216	.189	.297	1.208
Negative attitude EU mother				.704*	.310	2.023	.532~	.309	1.703	.537~	.311	1.710
Negative attitude EU father				.700*	.345	2.014	.575~	.336	1.776	.576~	.339	1.779
<i>Control variables</i>												
Education mother	-.091	.076	.913	-.079	.084	.924	-.061	.081	.941	-.062	.082	.940
Education father	-.054	.066	.947	-.051	.072	.951	-.041	.069	.960	-.040	.071	.961
Negative attitude immigrants	1.461***	.251	4.312	1.380***	.261	3.974	1.390***	.259	4.015	1.443***	.264	4.234
Negative attitude EU	1.766***	.294	5.846	1.600***	.309	4.955	1.549***	.306	4.706	1.564***	.313	4.780
Education	-.124~	.074	.883	-.125	.077	.883	-.114	.076	.892	-.114	.076	.892
In school	-.328	.278	.720	-.318	.287	.727	-.315	.287	.730	-.265	.290	.767
Occupational status: low ^a	.843~	.463	2.324	.953*	.479	2.594	.837~	.478	2.309	.850~	.480	2.340
Occupational status: medium ^b	1.268***	.345	3.555	1.304***	.360	3.685	1.261***	.357	3.527	1.236**	.359	3.442
Occupational status: high ^c	.871*	.385	2.390	.853*	.400	2.347	.874*	.397	2.398	.821*	.401	2.273
Church attendance	.038	.066	1.039	-.007	.069	.993	.011	.068	1.012	.002	.068	1.002
Age-18	-.004	.070	.996	.028	.072	1.028	-.003	.072	.997	-.004	.072	.996
Female	-1.380***	.310	.252	-1.455***	.329	.233	-1.441***	.327	.237	-1.750***	.358	.174
French speaking ^d	-.633	.421	.531	-.598	.464	.550	-.470	.454	.625	-.464	.459	.629
Italian speaking ^d	-2.898*	1.477	.055	-2.995*	1.513	.050	-2.950*	1.502	.052	-2.890~	1.498	.056
Intercept	-5.321***	.584		-6.017***	.665		-5.907***	.647		-5.838***	.651	
Log likelihood	-533.757			-539.617			-527.362			-523.865		
Variance level 2 (individual)	2.001*	.787		2.215*	.927		2.310**	.896		2.281*	.917	
Variance level 3 (parents)	2.768**	.934		3.798***	1.106		3.002**	.976		3.144**	1.017	

Source: Swiss Household Panel Data (1999–2007).

Note: Log likelihood of model containing only control variables is -644.724.

~ $p < .10$ * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$.

^a Low status: semi- and unskilled manual, farm labour, self-employed farm, reference group is no occupation.

^b Medium status: routine non-manual, self-employed with and without employees, manual supervision, skilled manual., reference group is no occupation.

^c High status: higher controllers, low controllers, reference group is no occupation.

^d Reference group is German speaking.

ratio shows that a mother expressing a preference for the SVP makes a child more than five times as likely to vote for the SVP as well. In contrast, the weaker influence of fathers' SVP voting behaviour on their offspring's preference for the radical right disappears after controlling for parental attitudinal characteristics. After controlling for parental SVP preference, the effect of parental attitudes on their offspring's SVP voting is limited. The previous model showed that mothers' and fathers' negative attitudes toward the EU positively and significantly influenced youngsters' radical right voting behaviour, but once the mothers' radical right voting behaviour is included only a modest effect of mother's negative attitude toward the EU remains.

Finally, let us turn to the model including interaction terms. As described above, the aim of this model is to test whether parental SVP voting and related attitudes differentially influence SVP voting for sons and daughters. Interactions of the child's gender with father's and mother's negative attitudes toward the EU and toward immigrants and with father's and mother's SVP voting preference were estimated in separate models. Only one

significant interaction term was found: mother's SVP voting and the gender of the child. Hence, we added only this interaction term in our fourth model. Note that inclusion of this interaction term changes the estimates for the mother's SVP voting compared to the previous models. In the interactive model, the main effect of mother's SVP voting now represents the effect of mother's SVP voting for male respondents only. It shows that the mother's SVP voting has a positive effect on boys' preference for the SVP. The positive and significant interaction term of mother's SVP voting and being female indicates that, although women are much less likely to vote for the SVP than men, the positive influence of a mother's SVP voting on her offspring's SVP preference is significantly stronger for girls. In other words, young people whose mothers vote for the SVP are more likely to vote for the SVP, and this is especially the case for girls.

5. Conclusion

Writing four decades ago, Jennings and Niemi (1968) confirmed the conventional wisdom about the role of

parents in shaping the political character of their children. Our study offers strong evidence that such a socialisation process also shapes radical right support in Switzerland today. Young people whose parents vote for the SVP are significantly more likely to support the SVP. This holds even controlling for the household socioeconomic status and the young people's main socioeconomic and attitudinal characteristics. Hence, the influence may not be ascribed to a possible inheritance of young people's structural positions from their parents. Notably, mothers' SVP preference seems to affect their offspring's SVP preference.

Parental attitudes toward Switzerland joining the EU also influence the SVP-preference of their children, but the effect of the actual party preference of especially the mother is stronger. Having a mother who votes for the SVP appears to be a principal path to SVP voting for young people, and more so for girls than for boys. Fathers' preference for the SVP does not matter once his attitudes toward immigrants and the EU are controlled for.

Our findings underline the need to differentiate the influences of fathers' and mothers' radical right party preference on their offspring's radical right support. While our findings confirm expectations that mothers' radical right voting behaviour will be more influential than fathers' radical right voting behaviour, the exciting next step is to further understand the reason why mothers and fathers influence their offspring's radical right party preference in different ways. Scholars (Bao et al., 1999; Zuckerman et al., 2007) tend to assume that mothers matter more than fathers because of their higher frequency of interaction with their children. An additional or alternative explanation with respect to radical right voting behaviour might be that given that women seem to feel more resistance to voting for the radical right than men, they may become true supporters – and consequently put more effort into 'influencing' others – once they decide to give their vote to the radical right. Future research might also further investigate which family characteristics shape the extent to which children assume the radical right preference of their parents. In particular, children who have been raised in a family with connections to radical right organisations might be more influenced by their parents' radical right party choice.

Combining the socialisation research with the research on SVP, we trust to have shown that this stream of research cannot be neglected if we want to gain a fuller understanding of the path to SVP voting and more generally radical right voting. Indeed, since the SVP shares with other radical right parties an image that is heavily implanted with the immigration and asylum issue and considered as a radical right party among most radical right scholars (see e.g. Mudde, 2007; Husbands, 2000; Betz, 2001; Betz and Johnson, 2004) we believe to have added with our study to the understanding of the success of radical right parties. However, it would be interesting to compare the case of the SVP with other radical right parties to investigate in an empirical way to what extent our findings hold for radical right parties in different political systems.

Appendix. Descriptive statistics for all variables (2221 observations from 918 respondents).

	Range	M	SD
SVP voting	0–1	.121	.326
SVP voting mother	0–1	.072	.258
SVP voting father	0–1	.107	.309
Negative attitude immigrants mother	0–1	.273	.446
Negative attitude immigrants father	0–1	.246	.431
Negative attitude EU mother	0–1	.364	.481
Negative attitude EU father	0–1	.433	.496
Education mother	0–10	4.99	2.44
Education father	0–10	6.58	2.65
Negative attitude immigrants	0–1	.239	.427
Negative attitude EU	0–1	.455	.498
Education	0–10	3.84	2.51
In school	0–1	.655	.475
No occupation	0–1	.338	.473
Occupation, low status ^a	0–1	.093	.290
Occupation, medium status ^b	0–1	.350	.477
Occupation, high status ^c	0–1	.220	.414
Church attendance	0–8	2.77	2.01
Age	18–25	20.80	2.18
Female ^d	0–1	.480	.500
French speaking	0–1	.238	.426
Italian speaking	0–1	.025	.155
German speaking	0–1	.737	.440

Source: Swiss Household Panel Data (1999–2007).

^a Low status: semi- and unskilled manual, farm labour, self-employed farm.

^b Medium status: routine non-manual, self-employed with and without employees, manual supervision, skilled manual.

^c High status: higher controllers, low controllers.

^d On level of the respondent there are 422 women (45.9%) and 497 men (54.1%).

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